

# On Being Conquered in Byzantium

DUMBARTON OAKS SYMPOSIUM, 16–17 APRIL 2021

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The famous adage that history is written by the victors may have become a truism, but the voices of conquered people have never been fully silenced—rather, we may not have been interested in hearing them. All too often, historiography (by no means limited to Byzantine studies) has focused on great-man histories, impersonal studies of societies, or the “longue durée,” all modes that diminish the importance of subjective individual experiences of people who were not great or who were not men.

This symposium therefore aimed to refocus the collective scholarly gaze of Byzantinists away from the

victors in war and toward the vanquished; away from heroes and rulers and toward victims and casualties; away from the political, economic, historical, and social causes of war and toward the personal and subjective experience of it; away from the insistence of dominant voices and toward the recuperation of marginalized ones.

Bringing together twelve specialists in literature, history, art history, and contemporary cultural theory, this symposium sought to better understand both how Byzantines themselves understood being conquered and, as importantly, what being conquered in Byzantium can mean for us now.

## FRIDAY, 16 APRIL

### INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome: Thomas B. F. Cummins and Anna Stavrakopoulou

Introduction: Adam Goldwyn,  
North Dakota State University

### CONCEPTUALIZING CONQUEST

Chair: John Duffy

*Whose War Ethic? Dominant vs. Subaltern Views of Justified Warfare in Byzantium*  
Yannis Stouraitis, University of Edinburgh

*Eucharistic Imagery and Dissent:  
The Iconography of Liturgical Discord*  
Emily L. Spratt, Columbia University

### SLAVES AND PRISONERS OF WAR

Chair: Claudia Rapp

*The Wandering Captive's Letter of Clerical Advocacy  
(Aichmalotikon)*  
Alasdair Grant, University of Edinburgh

*The Mass-Blinding of Prisoners of War in Byzantium*  
Jake Ransohoff, Harvard University

*Conquered Things:  
Omens, Sculptures, and the Imperial Landscape*  
Roland Betancourt, University of California, Irvine

## SATURDAY, 17 APRIL

### WARTIME EXPERIENCE IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Chair: Dimiter Angelov

*Arab-Byzantine Wars and the Capture of*

*Byzantine Women*

Nadia Maria El Cheikh,  
American University of Beirut

*Acculturated to Compete: The South Slavs and the*

*Byzantine Conquest, 10th–12th Centuries*

Kiril Petkov, University of Wisconsin, River Falls

### CONQUEST AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Chair: Ioli Kalavrezou

*The Experience of (Re)conquest in Medieval Iberia*

Adam Kosto, Columbia University

*Byzantine Warriors at Nicaea: How Do They Differ  
from the Common People?*

Yilmaz Erdal, Hacettepe University

*A Thing Neither Able to Be Described in Words  
or Borne in Deed: Re-enacting the Conquest of  
Thessalonike*

Emmanuel Bourbouhakis, Princeton University

### CONCLUSION

Chair: Elizabeth Bolman

Adam Goldwyn, North Dakota State University